

CITY OF SAN JOSÉ, CALIFORNIA  
Department of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement  
801 North First Street, Room 400  
San José, California 95110-1795

Hearing Date/Agenda Number  
H.L.C. July 2003      Item 6.a.

File Number  
SP01-035

Application Type  
Special Use Permit

Council District      SNI  
6      None

Planning Area  
Central

Assessor's Parcel Number(s)  
261-16-052

## STAFF REPORT

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Completed by: Erin Morris

Location: southeast corner of Naglee Avenue and Park Avenue

Gross Acreage: 4.96

Net Acreage: 4.96

Net Density: n/a

Existing Zoning: R-1-8

Existing Use: Administrative Building

Proposed Zoning: No change

Proposed Use: 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty Egyptian Gardens

### GENERAL PLAN

Completed by: ELM

Land Use/Transportation Diagram Designation  
Public/ Quasi Public

Project Conformance:  
☒ Yes    ☐ No  
☐ See Analysis and Recommendations

### SURROUNDING LAND USES AND ZONING

Completed by: ELM

North: Residential

R-1-8 Single Family Residential

East: Residential

R-1-8 Single Family Residential

South: Residential

R-M Multiple Residence

West: Residential

R-1-8 Single Family Residential and A(PD) Planned Development

### ENVIRONMENTAL STATUS

Completed by: ELM

☐ Environmental Impact Report found complete  
☐ Negative Declaration circulated on  
☐ Negative Declaration adopted on

☒ Exempt  
☐ Environmental Review Incomplete

### FILE HISTORY

Completed by: ELM

Annexation Title: College Park/ Burbank Sunol

Date: 12/08/1925

### PLANNING DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION

☐ Recommend Approval  
☒ Recommend Approval with Conditions  
☐ Recommend Denial

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_

#### OWNER / DEVELOPER

AMORC, Inc.  
Julie Scott, President  
1342 Naglee Avenue  
San José, CA 95191

#### ARCHITECT

Hardison Komatsu Ivelich & Tucker  
Attn: Jason Shirriff  
538 Ninth Street, Suite 240  
Oakland, CA 94607

#### ENGINEER

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PUBLIC AGENCY COMMENTS RECEIVED

Completed by: ELM

Department of Public Works

See attached memorandum

Other Departments and Agencies

None

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GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE

None

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ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**PROJECT BACKGROUND**

The subject site, Rosicrucian Park, consists of a 4.96-acre site located on the city block bounded by Naglee Avenue, Park Avenue, Chapman Street, and Randol Avenue. This project involves the Administrative Annex Building complex, which is generally located on the central portion of the site. The site is located in the R-1-8 Single-Family Residential Zoning District with a San José 2020 General Plan Land Use/Transportation Diagram designation of Public/ Quasi Public. Existing residential uses and a small commercial development surround the site.

The applicant, Julie Scott on behalf of AMORC, Inc, is requesting a Special Use Permit to allow demolition of the Administrative Annex complex and the construction of an 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty Egyptian-inspired Peace Garden, which will contain an Ahkmaton-era shrine.

Rosicrucian Park is listed in the City of San José Historic Resources Inventory as eligible for the National Register of Historic Places and in the California Property Data File as eligible for the National Register, though not through a formal determination process. A report titled "Historical and Architectural Evaluation of Rosicrucian Park" dated December 6, 2002 and revised February 20, 2003 was prepared by Archives and Architecture. The report is attached to this staff report as an addendum to the information summarized and analyzed below.

**SITE BACKGROUND**

The internationally known, non-profit, educational charitable organization, Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis (AMORC, Inc) was established in the United States in 1915 by Harvey Spencer Lewis. Lewis selected San José as the permanent location for the Rosicrucian Order in 1927. The first building was constructed on the site in 1927, and the Rosicrucian Order has continued to utilize the site for educational and spiritual purposes since that time.

**HISTORIC RESOURCE DESCRIPTION**

The Administrative Annex Building is one of approximately a dozen structures and buildings on the Rosicrucian Park site. The Annex Building is a complex of buildings and remaining portions of buildings that were demolished in the 1960s. It is located in the central area of Rosicrucian Park. The Annex Building consists of approximately ten structures that were built over a period of twenty years. The structures are internally

connected, and include portions of a larger complex of buildings that once included the original museum and administrative buildings that were demolished in 1969. These buildings were removed to accommodate the construction of the present Administrative Building, northwest of the Annex Building, located at 1342 Naglee Avenue.

Besides the office and administration spaces, the building contained H. Spencer Lewis' original office (see page 37), known as the "Hollywood Office," a Board of Director's meeting room, mail handling and storage areas, loading, and the rear portions of the museum that housed the Memphis Temple. The interior spaces have been modified over time with wall, door, and finish changes, and the inclusion of dropped ceilings. New walls were constructed at the northwest side of the building facing Naglee Avenue in 1969 following demolition of the complex, and a covered breezeway was built that connects the replacement administration building to the older annex. A driveway to the loading dock is located off Chapman Street, and alleyways on both sides of this receiving area provide access to exterior areas between the buildings, including a small loading dock to the rear of the Rose-Croix University Science building.

The buildings are of wood frame construction with stucco exteriors and plaster interior. They have flat built-up roofs with low parapet surrounds. The portions of these buildings associated with the early museum have crenellated parapets (see photo page 23 of the report). The parapet that rises above the area of the Memphis Temple (see photo page 36) has saw-tooth battlements. This portion of the complex, as well as the remaining areas that were located to the rear of the original museum, has heavily textured stucco walls.

The openings that surround the original H. Spencer Lewis office have quoin surrounds, and ogee arches top the side entries to this structure. At the second level, small circular windows have small square casements set within the frame. Other windows throughout the complex are either wood or steel framed casements or double-hung sash.

The interior of the Memphis Temple space is rectangular in shape and contains a tile floor that is edged with a band of blue tile. The walls are sectioned with alternating recessed and projecting panels, and the projecting panels and wainscot section of the recessed sections are painted with a faux sandstone finish. The square-shaped recessed areas contain painted vistas with images of palm trees. A frieze that surrounds the room is inscribed with symbols, and topped by an Egyptian gorge, also known as a cavetto cornice consisting of vertical leaves inset in the concave form.

The building is in a deteriorated state and has been vacant since the early 1990s. Lewis' Hollywood office is presently impacted by rainwater intrusion, although the temple space appears to have retained its integrity.

The southwest wall of the complex that faces the plaza and fountain contains a tile mosaic (c. 1960s) designed by Ralph Lewis (son of H. Spencer Lewis) which appears to have integrity to its original design.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

Under the provisions of Section 15301 of the State Guidelines for Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) which relates to existing facilities, this project is found to be exempt from environmental review in that the project involves demolition of a commercial building in an urbanized area.

## **GENERAL PLAN CONFORMANCE**

Rosicrucian Park, which includes the Rosicrucian Museum, is consistent with the site's General Plan Land Use/Transportation Diagram designation of Public/ Quasi Public, which includes public land uses including museums. The designation is also applied to institutional uses such as churches and educational institutions.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The project proposes to demolish the Administrative Annex complex and replace with an 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty Egyptian Peace Garden. The garden area will include a dais, temple, and arbor designed to complement the existing structures on the site in material, color, and design.

## **ANALYSIS**

The primary project issues include evaluation of the historical and architectural significance of the Administrative Annex complex that is proposed for demolition. The historic report contains a thorough evaluation of Rosicrucian Park, including structures that are not proposed for demolition (see pages 39-44 of the report) and the subject Administrative Annex buildings. Below is a summary of that evaluation specific to the Administrative Annex building complex.

### *Evaluation of California Register of Historic Resources Criterion*

1. Under Criterion 1, the Annex Building, although constructed during the period of significance for the site and used as part of the Rosicrucian Order's operations, has less value [than other extant buildings on the site] in conveying the historic significance of the site, as it was originally attached as accessory spaces to the museum building which is no longer extant. It no longer functionally contributes to the setting, and does not publicly convey the character of the historic setting.
2. Under Criterion 2, Harvey Spencer Lewis is a person important to our past. The Annex Building, although done under his leadership, does not convey his leadership to the same level [as other extant buildings on the site], and the building lacks the necessary integrity to the historic setting to be considered historically significant.
3. Under Criterion 3, the site and the contributing structures within it embody distinctive characteristics of Egyptian Revival architecture that are unique in the region and clearly represent high artistic values in their visual presence in the community. Within the annex complex, the office of H. Spencer Lewis referred to as the "Hollywood Office" has some distinction and value for its unique façade and configuration, although it contributes only in a secondary way to the visual significance of the site. The extant Memphis Room located within the center of the complex on the second level is of some significance artistically, and as one of the oldest and last remnants of the early museum that is now gone. The Akhnaton tile mosaic designed by Ralph Lewis is also important as a public artwork, but not historically significant as it was built in contemporary times during the 1960s.

### *Conformance with Historic Preservation Ordinance*

Based on the criteria of the City of San José Historic Preservation Ordinance, the annex building is rated 51.7. However, the number has limited value within the evaluation process, as the building is not a unified structure but rather an assemblage of buildings constructed over time. Portions of the annex may be considered contributors to a larger landmark site encompassing Rosicrucian Park if so designated. Because the buildings

within the Administrative Annex building complex lack integrity to the original historic setting, they would not appear to individually meet the qualifications for listing as landmark structures.

### **CONCLUSION**

The Administrative Annex Building complex, while containing some features of value and distinction such as the Memphis Temple and Hollywood Office, contributes only in a secondary way to the significance of the Rosicrucian Park site. Due to the removal of most of the original museum and administration building in the 1960s, the remaining building complex lacks the necessary integrity to the historic setting to be considered historically significant under the criteria of the California Register of Historic Resources and the San José Historic Preservation Ordinance (Chapter 13.48 of the Municipal Code). Approval of the proposed demolition will allow the area where the building complex is currently located to be developed into Peace Gardens and a shrine, which will further enhance the remaining structures at Rosicrucian Park.

### **COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

This item will be scheduled for Director's Hearing in late July of 2003. A hearing notice will be sent out to all property owners within 500 feet of the subject site.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Planning staff recommends that the Historic Landmarks Commission recommend that the proposed project be approved by the Director of Planning, with the following special conditions.

1. Colors and materials presented to the Historic Landmarks Commission shall be included on the approved plan set.
2. The interior and exterior of Lewis's Hollywood Office and the interior of the Memphis Temple of the Administrative Annex Building be photographically documented using 35mm black and white film and supplemented with digital photography.
3. Materials from the Administrative Annex Building complex shall be offered for salvage.